



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

1 START UP:
Neighborhoods seek out
strategic and are designated by

2

PLAN PREPARATION:
Draft plan prepared with support from local authority,
community engagement and advice from consultants.

OPTIONS

A Community Engagement Workbook

4

REFERENDUM:
Referendum organised by local authority
should be adopted.

May 2013

Neighbourhood planning



Smart Growth America

Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring better development strategies to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transportation or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods. For additional information visit www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

About the OPTIONS Guide. The most effective petroleum brownfield redevelopment efforts involve well-organized community input and leadership. After EPA created the PREPARED (Process for Risk Evaluation, Property Analysis and Reuse Decisions) Guide (<http://www.epa.gov/region1/brownfields/prepared/>) for its contractors and local governments, the Agency recognized the need for a similar tool to support community engagement. Working together through a cooperative agreement, the EPA and Smart Growth America developed this Community Engagement Workbook to meet the needs of a wide range of grantees and their community partners. We hope that it will empower users to participate in community redevelopment decisions and become advocates for positive change.

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Introduction

This guide was created to help the people who live and work in the neighborhoods around brownfield sites participate in redevelopment decisions. These citizens have information and opinions, investments and energy that can drive revitalization forward. By getting organized and learning about the redevelopment process, you can help create OPTIONS for reuse – thus the title of this guide, “Organizing to Promote Targeted Improvements in Our Neighborhoods.”

The worksheets in this guide will help you think through the information you need, the people you need to know, and the questions you need to answer to support and even lead redevelopment efforts. They can be used to initiate community conversations, share information and ideas, and prompt strategic thinking about others who could help you.

Who can use the OPTIONS worksheets?

These worksheets are for individual community members and community-based organizations like community development corporations, church groups, neighborhood associations - to name a few. If you are concerned about redeveloping a particular problem property in your neighborhood and you are motivated to provide some leadership, you or your group will find some of the guidance you need here.

Another audience for this guide is redevelopment professionals who want to support community participation in their investment decisions.

Redevelopment professionals may include local planners, redevelopment authority staff, and elected officials, as well as private sector planners, urban designers, and investors. This guide may be used to shape outreach plans, or it may be used to support community partners who have already been identified.

“A lot of folks who haven't had perhaps as much experience doing [community organizing around redevelopment] are more than capable, they just need a little guidance along the way, and I think your workbook will help a lot in that regard.”

Robert Nickels
Project Leader
Tutty's Crossing Coalition
Freeport, Illinois

How is this guide organized?

These worksheets are written with the assumption that a single brownfield site has already been identified. They can also be used to address redevelopment of non-contaminated vacant, abandoned and underutilized sites, or clusters of sites. In all cases, these worksheets will help your community to ensure that reuse of specific sites supports the surrounding neighborhood and supports other community development goals.

These worksheets organize your outreach work into three phases: Prepare, Learn, and Activate.

1. Prepare. Find other partners who have an interest in how a site could be reused. Organize yourselves to understand common interests, share information, and divide the work.

2. Learn. Arm yourself with information about your community's needs, site conditions, and the redevelopment process.
3. Activate. Use your informed, united voices to ask for what your community needs and build political and public support for revitalization efforts.

We based this guide on the experience of hundreds of citizens and their local partners working together over many years. As you use it, we hope you will join these pioneers, and let us know how we can improve these tools.

Where can I learn more?

If you want to learn more about the redevelopment process, there are a number of excellent resources available free on the web. Some stellar examples include:

Petroleum Brownfields: Selecting A Reuse Option (2009) EPA Document ID 510-R-09-004. Available from the EPA at <http://www.epa.gov/oust/pubs/pubspbfreuseoption.pdf>

Opportunities for Petroleum Brownfields (2011) EPA Document ID 510-R-11-002. Available from the EPA at <http://www.epa.gov/oust/pubs/pbfopportunities.htm>

Reuse: Creating Community-based Brownfield Redevelopment Strategies (2011). Available from the American Planning Association at <http://www.planning.org/research/brownfields/pdf/brownfieldsguide.pdf>

"The ATSDR Brownfields/Land Reuse Action Model Fact Sheet "(2012). Available from the Centers for Disease Control at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/brownfields/docs/Action%20Model%202012.pdf>

Phase One: Prepare

To speak with a strong, informed voice throughout the redevelopment process and beyond, a community group needs to be able to speak with and for a many different people and organizations who have an interest in the brownfield site and how it will be reused. The worksheets in this phase walk you through the tasks of identifying potential partners, developing a plan for communicating with them, and working with them over time.

If you already have an effective organization or coalition working on community development issues in your area, you may want to skip this phase, though it can still be helpful to review Worksheet 1 and consider other potential partners.

Worksheet 1: Identify Community Members

This worksheet will help to identify community members and other stakeholders that can help organize the community engagement process and build a representative coalition.

Stakeholders make important contributions to the redevelopment decision process, so one of the first steps in a community engagement effort is to identify people and organizations who may be interested in what happens to a brownfield site. Community members and stakeholders may include property owners, residents, developers, government agencies, and others involved with or impacted by the property or proposed reuse.

Suggestions for using Worksheet 1

Gather a group of people and answer questions two and three together. You could do this informally or as part of a larger meeting.

Question two prompts you to think about how to define the impacted community. Land use planners often define this as a certain distance around the site, for instance a 100-foot radius. Groups of people - throughout the neighborhood and beyond - may be affected by the site's current condition and potential future uses. Considering both types of impacted communities will help you identify more potential partners.

Once you have completed the worksheet, you will need to track down contact information for each of the people and groups you have identified for use in Worksheet 2.

Worksheet 2: Develop a Plan

This worksheet can help communities develop a plan for how they will organize their partnership, define how information and feedback regarding their project will be gathered and shared, and identify the resources they will need to participate in or lead the redevelopment process. As you prepare to participate in or establish a revitalization project, you will need a plan to guide your outreach and information sharing work. The plan will help you capture and maintain commitments from your partners and move forward together.

Suggestions for using Worksheet 2

Part I. Assign responsibility for contacting and reaching out to potential partners and asking for their help. If there are people on your list that you do not know, you might want to identify another

partner who could reach out to them on your behalf and introduce you. If your list is very long, start by looking for groups or individuals who can help you reach the rest of your list.

Each responsible person should reach out to his or her contacts, share information, and solicit commitments for participation in an ongoing process. Depending on your needs, you may want to define specific roles or levels of commitment, such as:

- Full partners
- Helpers
- People who want to attend public meetings
- People who just want more information

Part II. Work with people who have committed to a role in your process to decide on answers to these questions about how the group will work together. Share the answers with everyone on your list, so that they know how they can participate in the group and follow your work.

Part III. Think about what resources you will need going forward, and work with your partners to pool available resources and identify gaps where further fundraising or outreach may be needed.

Worksheet 1: Identify Community Members

1. What is the address of the property or properties that are the focus of this engagement activity?

2. What is the impacted area? Describe the area surrounding the property or properties that will be impacted by the potential reuse or could impact the reuse of the property. Identify streets or physical features that define the extent of the area. This may be easiest to do by drawing the boundaries of the community on a map. Consider:

- Do the area's boundaries change if you consider different impacts?
- Has any other organization or local government defined an impact area? How does yours compare?

3. Who currently uses the site or is affected by the site? Who could be affected by reuse of the site? Who else should participate or have representation in this engagement effort?

You may list individuals or groups without knowing their names. For instance, “the property owner.” You can also list groups who may be impacted by the site but who are not organized, for instance, “children with asthma” or “people who shop at the convenience store.”

Worksheet 2: Develop a Plan

Part I. Gather the following information for each of the individuals or organizations identified on Worksheet 1:

1. Name
2. Organization (if applicable)
3. Phone
4. E-mail
5. Why might they be interested?
6. Who will contact?
7. Does the person or organization want to participate? How much?

Part II. Work with the partners you've enlisted to answer the following questions about leadership and communication.

1. Will an individual, organization (e.g., neighborhood organization, existing community organization, and coalition), steering committee, or other group oversee the effort? Describe how oversight and management of the engagement effort will be conducted.

2. Will there be a leader or spokesperson? If so, who?

3. What is the process for making decisions?

4. How will other partners learn what's happening?

5. How will organizers receive feedback from members? What will they do with the feedback?

6. How will you communicate with other community members who are not partners?

Part III. What resources will you need to help the group work together?

Resource	Availability (currently available, accessible, identified but availability unknown)	Who can provide?
Introductions to other partners		
Labor (volunteer or paid)		
Meeting Space		
Ways to communicate (website, email listserv, etc.)		
Supplies (paper, access to computers, copying, etc.)		
Technical expertise		
Legal expertise		
Funding		
Other?		

Phase Two: Learn

One of the most important resources you can develop for your community is reliable, understandable information to share with community members, property owners and investors, and public officials. Gathering information, making it clear, and sharing it with the people who need it will help your group make informed choices. The information you gather can also make you a valuable resource for public and private-sector decision makers, increasing your opportunities to participate in the redevelopment process.

Worksheet 3: Identify Needs

This worksheet will help the community identify their needs and begin a conversation about how site reuse can meet those needs.

A brownfield site is a community asset because it creates an opportunity to build something that is valuable to the community. One type of value is economic – the site may generate jobs and economic activity. Another type is fiscal – tax revenues from the new development may generate taxes that support local services. Redevelopment can also provide more direct benefits to the neighborhood by meeting specific community needs such as those for affordable health care, adult education, fresh food, parks, flood control, etc. Your group can increase the chances that reuse will directly benefit the neighborhood if they are clear about the things they need and want most.

While it is good to have community priorities, it is also important to understand that property owners and the local government may be more focused on the economic and fiscal benefits of reuse. In situations where a site reuse has already been announced, your partners may have concerns about how that reuse will affect the neighborhood and ideas about how to improve it. If you're in this situation, this worksheet will help you identify potential conflicts and opportunities created by the proposed reuse.

Suggestions for using Worksheet 3

This worksheet is split into three parts to meet the different needs of communities discussing a site where no reuse has been planned and communities discussing how a proposed reuse will affect their needs. Part I is the starting point for both groups. Part II is for sites with no reuse planned and Part III is for sites with a planned reuse. If you develop specific reuse ideas in Part II, you can use Part III to further explore how those uses would affect you and your partners.

There are many different methods available for identifying community needs. The most obvious way to get this information is to ask – either in face-to-face meetings or in mail-in or online survey. In addition to residents and members of your group, you may also want to talk to public and non-profit service providers if they aren't already involved.

The questions presented in this worksheet should serve as your starting point – there may be more different questions that work better for you. You are likely to get many different answers to these questions, so think about how you will figure out which needs are most urgent, most widespread, or otherwise rise to the top of your group's list.

Many communities use a public meeting to gather and/or sort information about community needs. If you choose to do a survey or a series of meetings with “key stakeholders” in advance, you can

present that information and use it to begin a conversation. Then people at the meeting can prioritize needs using a tool such as voting or using colored dots to mark several things they think are important.

Worksheet 4: Identify Specific Property and Ownership Issues

This worksheet will help community groups compile details and insights that can be used to develop their revitalization plan.

Not every property is right for every use, and sites that are contaminated, vacant, and/or abandoned are likely to have legal and environmental constraints that must be cleared up before a site is redeveloped. In most communities, there are also plans and zoning laws that will affect how a site can be used. Understanding these site constraints and issues will help you make better decisions about the reuse options that best meet your community's needs, and will give you a clearer picture of the work it will take to achieve redevelopment.

Suggestions for using Worksheet 4

You will likely need help from local government staff to answer these questions. If a redevelopment agency or clean-up agency is already involved, they may have this information at their fingertips. If the information is not already assembled somewhere, you may need to do some legwork to find the answers. Many cities and counties make ownership and tax payment information available through their tax assessor's web page. A code enforcement official may already know a lot about an abandoned site.

Worksheet 5: Set Goals

This worksheet will help to clearly communicate the community's goals, priorities, and key strategies.

Goals provide your group and the community as a whole with a clear statement of your priorities. They can be communicated easily to new partners and they can help you make choices about what to do next when situations change. Develop goals by describing the key considerations for the engagement effort based on the needs you've identified and the property's unique issues. Suggestions for using this worksheet.

Use the information you have gathered from Worksheets 3 and 4 to draft answers to the questions in this worksheet. Because it is so important to have clear goals and priorities, it may be easiest to let one person or a small team do the drafting, and then discuss the answers among your leadership team or all of your group's partners. It can be difficult to write clearly in a large group, but at the same time you want to be sure that all of your partners understand and agree with your answers to these questions.

Keep this worksheet up-to-date as the situation changes. It can be very useful as you speak with potential partners, investors and public officials in Phase 3.

Worksheet 3: Identify Needs and Priorities

Part I. For all sites

1. What are the neighborhood's most important assets or resources? Locate these assets on a map if appropriate. Are there any relationships between these assets and the site?

2. What are the neighborhood's biggest problems? Are there any relationships between the site and these problems? Explain.

Part II. For sites where no reuse is currently planned

3. What would help the community make their important assets more valuable?

4. What would help the community solve the problems identified in question 2?

5. How could the site be used to help the community solve problems or increase the value of assets? Rank these responses based on their ability to meet important needs.

6. Are there reuse ideas the community supports?

Part III. For sites where a reuse is already planned

7. How could the proposed reuse support existing community assets? Are there specific designs, actions, or choices that would better support community assets?

8. How might the proposed reuse harm existing community assets? Are there specific designs, actions, or choices that could harm community assets?

9. How might the proposed reuse solve or address community problems? Are there specific designs, actions, or choices that would help solve community problems?

10. How might the proposed reuse make community problems worse? Are there specific designs, actions, or choices that could make problems worse?

Worksheet 4: Identify Specific Property and Ownership Issues

1. Is the site composed of more than one parcel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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2. Who owns the parcel(s)?

3. Has a reuse been identified, whether in a local plan or by the owners?

4. Does reuse require the sale of the parcel(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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5. Are there tax liens or other barriers to reusing the parcel(s)?

6. Are there any restrictions on use of the parcel(s) designed to limit exposure to hazardous materials? (These are known as “institutional controls.”)

7. Are the parcels zoned? If so, what does current zoning allow?

8. What are the site conditions? How is the site affecting the surrounding neighborhood?

Safety:

Security:

Aesthetics:

Health and
Environmental:

Nuisance:

Other:

Worksheet 5: Set Goals

1. What is your group's overall goal for your involvement?

2. Do you have any specific goals for public involvement?

3. What do you want to achieve through the reuse of the brownfield site?

4. What do you want to avoid in reusing the brownfield site?

5. Do you support any specific uses for the site?

6. Do you support any specific offsite investments to make a new use better for the neighborhood? For example, if your site is currently used as an informal park, a new park nearby would mean that the neighborhood doesn't need to lose a place to play.

Phase Three: Activate

Worksheet 6: Identify Obstacles and Actions

This worksheet will help you anticipate potential obstacles to achieving reuse goals and develop actions to overcome these obstacles.

Like the straw that broke the camel's back, one small complication may be enough to bring a redevelopment process to a halt. While no one could anticipate everything, you can get ahead of the game by thinking about possible obstacles and coming up with an action plan to avoid them or deal with them so they don't become sticking points.

Suggestions for using Worksheet 6

This exercise is most useful for a small group of people who can work well together and are comfortable brainstorming and candidly discussing potential problems. If you choose to do this work in a larger group, use techniques that encourage every individual to participate. For instance, ask each person to identify obstacles, and then work in groups to discuss possible actions.

Worksheet 7: Understanding the Political and Social Landscape

This worksheet will help you identify stakeholders that can shape the redevelopment process.

Many public agencies, elected officials and private individuals will influence redevelopment decisions. Now that you have an organized, informed community group, one of your roles is to reach out to these people and develop a working relationship that allows you to share your views and priorities and participate in decisions.

Suggestions for using Worksheet 7

Identifying stakeholders is an ongoing process. As you speak with more people about the site and your neighborhood, you can continue to build your lists of potential partners and stakeholders.

Worksheet 8: Spread the Word

This worksheet looks at how to use engagement opportunities to achieve your goals.

The list you generated in Worksheet 7 will help define the work ahead for you. The next step is to identify opportunities to talk to and work with these individuals and organizations to further your goals. There are many ways to engage new audiences depending on your group's goals and the specific issues of the redevelopment process. Engagement opportunities can take many forms and involve private meetings and correspondence with stakeholders, participation in public meetings, and your own efforts to share information with neighbors and the rest of your community.

Suggestions for using Worksheet 8

Worksheet 8 is your work plan. It is a list of opportunities to share all of the work you've done and weigh in on the plans, investments and decisions that will shape your neighborhood. This list may also point out whether you need to organize an engagement opportunity of your own in order to reach the people you need. If you have limited resources, you may need to think strategically about the most important opportunities to prepare for.

Worksheet 6: Identifying Obstacles and Actions

Note: Be sure to focus on what your community group and its members can do to avoid or manage each obstacle you write down – don't worry about anyone else for now!

What obstacles has the community encountered?	What actions can address the obstacle?
<i>Sample obstacle: Existing businesses are struggling for customers.</i>	<i>Sample action: Develop a marketing campaign to bring more people to the area.</i>
<i>Sample obstacle: Earlier plans to develop were opposed by neighbors.</i>	<i>Sample action: Work with neighbors and developers to build support for the next plan.</i>

What obstacles are anticipated?	What actions can address the obstacle?
<i>Sample obstacle: Neighbors will object to increased traffic.</i>	<i>Sample action: Work with city and developers to communicate real impacts and manage traffic on local streets.</i>
<i>Sample obstacle: Existing owner refuses to sell.</i>	<i>Sample action: Find out why and see if there is something we can do to persuade her.</i>

Are there potential obstacles to your group's effectiveness?	What actions can address the obstacle?
<i>Sample obstacle: No one has time to lead consistently.</i>	<i>Sample action: Assign leadership roles to a group and share information consistently so leadership jobs can be shared.</i>

Worksheet 7: Understand the Political and Social Landscape

Use this worksheet to identify individuals or organization taking part in or influencing reuse and redevelopment decisions. Repeat this worksheet for as many “decision influencers” as you can think of.

Influencer Name:	
Address:	
Email:	
Phone:	

Role in the process:

How can this person or organization help your group achieve its goals?

How can your group help this person or organization achieve his/her/its goals?

Worksheet 8: Spread the Word

What is the engagement opportunity and desired outcome?	Who are the key contacts for this opportunity?	What form of engagement do you use? (Note all that apply)
<i>Example: City Council Hearing on Redevelopment Authority Budget</i>	<i>Example: City Councilors' Staff</i>	<i>Example: Testimony at Council</i>
<i>Example: Inform the Mayor of our goals and who we are</i>	<i>Example: Mayor's staff</i>	<i>Example: Face-to-face meeting in her office or walking tour of our neighborhood</i>



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Smart Growth America advocates for people who want to live and work in great neighborhoods. We believe smart growth solutions support thriving businesses and jobs, provide more options for how people get around and make it more affordable to live near work and the grocery store. Our coalition works with communities to fight sprawl and save money. We are making America's neighborhoods great together.

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